THE ECONOMIC PROBLEM OF MAN

AND

ITS ISLAMIC SOLUTION

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INTRODUCTION

(Being an Address delivered in the Muslim University, Aligarh, on 20th October, 1941).

The economic problem which occupies in these days the centre of our intellectual life had never before come to so much prominence or assumed the importance it does to-day. I use the word "prominence" because, as a matter of fact, the importance which economics naturally has for the life of mankind has always, in every age, impelled individuals, communities, nations, countries and indeed all men to pay due attention to it. But in our days this attention has turned into an obsession leading to the creation of a new science of economics, embodied in voluminous books, with high-sounding terminology and large organisation at its back. Along with this, new complications have been introduced in the production, distribution and acquisition of the necessities of life. As a result of this there is such a plethora of discussion and scientific research about economic problems, that in face of it all the other problems of mankind seem to have paled into insignificance. Strange to say, however, that the object on which the attention of the whole world has been riveted in this manner, instead of getting any nearer solution, is becoming more and more complicated. In fact it has become a veritable enigma. The abstruse terminology of the science of economics and the scholarly subtleties and hair splittings of economic experts have so confounded and mystified the ordinary people that

the poor fellows, on hearing these expert discussions, stand aghast before the complexity of their economic problem and lose all hope of its solution, like a patient who is frightened on hearing from his doctor a biggish Latin name for his disease and thinks that he can be cured of his indisposition only by the special grace of God. In point of fact, however, if the smoke-screen and cloak of this scientific terminology and technical discussion is cast aside and the matter is looked at in its plain, natural simplicity, the economic problem of man can be easily understood, the advantageous aspect of the various solution adopted can be examined without difficulty, and the correct solution of this knotty problem can come within easy grasp of the ordinary man.

Apart from the magic of professional complications and the rigmarole of terminology woven round this problem, a further complication has arisen by reason of the fact that the economic problem of man which was, indeed, a part of the larger problem of human life, has been separated from the whole and looked at as if it were an independent problem by itself. And gradually this attitude has taken such a firm root that the economic problem has come to be regarded as the sole problem of life. This is even a greater mistake which has made its solution infinitely difficult. This attitude is, however, utterly unscientific. It is as if an expert in liver diseases isolates the liver from the whole bodily system and, disregarding the position allotted to and occupied by the liver in the human

body and its relationship with other bodily organs, starts looking at the liver in isolation; and then hecomes so much ahsorbed in its examination that ultimately the whole bodily frame and physical system appears to him as a vast liver and nothing else. You can very well understand that if the problems of bodily health were sought to be solved hy this "liverish" attitude, how impossible of solution they would become and to what extreme dangers will human life be exposed. In the same way if economics is isolated and segregated from the whole of which it is a part and an attempt is made to solve all the problems of life by means of economic panaceas as if man were no more than an economic animal and his moral and spiritual aspirations have no reality apart from his economic endeavours, you should not be surprised if choas and confusion are the final result.

Believe me, the existence of experts and specialists is one of the many calamities of modern age. A comprehensive and general outlook of life and its problems is becoming rare every day. Man has become a toy in the hands of one-eyed specialists of the different sciences and professions. If there is a physicist, he starts solving the riddle of the universe on the strength of physics alone. If one is observed by psychology, one seeks to build up a whole philosophy of life on the basis of his psychological observations and experiments. If man's knowledge is confined to sexology, he announces straightaway that the whole of human life is rotating on the axis of sexual passions so

much so that even the idea of God entered the human mind through this door. Similarly people who are engrossed in economics seek to convince mankind that the real problem of their life is the economic problem and all other problems are nothing but its off-shoots. As a matter of fact, all these problems should be considered together as a whole and each separate problem ought to be viewed as a special aspect of the single totality. All of them occupy a particular position in this whole and derive their importance from that position only. Man possesses a physical body which is subject to physical laws; from this view-point man is the subject of physics. But he is not a mere physical body so that all his problems could be solved by physics alone. He is a biological being as well, subject to biological law, and from this point of view he is the subject matter of the science of the biology also. But then again he is not merely a biological animal and a complete system of laws for the regulation of life cannot be deduced from the science of biology or zoology. In order to sustain his life he needs food, clothes and shelter; and viewed from his stand-point economics covers an important aspect of life. But he is not merely an eating, clothing, and shelter-seeking animal so that the whole philosophy of his life could be founded on the basis of economic alone. For the preservation of species man has recourse to reproduction and there is therefore found in him a strong sexual tendency. Considered from this stand-point the science of sexology is also important for his life. But here again

he is not wbolly an instrument of production to be examined merely with sexological glasses. Man is possessed of a mind furnished witb the means of knowledge and cognition and charged with passions and desires. From this point of view psychology covers a large part of his being. But then again be is not mere mind for a complete scbeme of his life to be deduced from the principles of psychology. Man is also social being obliged by bis very nature to mix witb other human beings. From tbis point of view many aspects of his life fall under sociology. But his sociability is merely one of tbe qualities of his existence and it would be foolisb if the science of sociology is relied upon to furnish a complete blue-print of his life. Man is an intellectual being whose nature demands tbe satisfaction of his reason as well. From this point of view rational sciences also satisfy one of his special requirements and demands. But, again, he is not solely an intellectual being and rational sciences alone can hardly furnish the full material for a complete plan of human life. Man is a moral and spiritual being too, exercising distinction between good and evil, and possessing an innate urge to reach out to realities beyond the comprehension of reason. From this point of view the moral and spiritual sciences satisfy another important demand of man's nature. But then, again, he is not all morals and spirit from top to bottom so that merely moral and spiritual sciences could suffice to guide him through life. Truly speaking, man is all these things taken together, while apart from them, there is a very important matter to be

considered about him, namely, that with all his being and in all the different aspects of his life he is a part of the vast and immense system of this universe. Viewed from this stand-point, the question as to what position he occupies in the universe and how he should work as a part of it assumes the highest significance, for unless his position in the universe is correctly determined, no satisfactory code of life and conduct can be evolved from him. It also becomes necessary for man to determine the objects for which he should work and to decide whether those objects are consistent with his dignity and the position which he occupies in the universe. The last two questions are fundamental to human life. It is on the basis of these two fundamentals that a whole philosophy of life is evolved, and under the influence of that philosophy, all sciences which concern men and the world accumulate facts within their own respective spheres and on the basis of conclusions drawn from the facts a life programme is chalked out for the guidance of man.

It should be quite clear now that if you wish to understand any problem of your life, it is wrong to confine your attention microscopically to that particular problem alone or to look upon life as a whole with a preconceived bias in favour of that particular branch of life to which the problem is more nearly related. Rather for a correct understanding and true comprehension you shall have to look at it in its relationship with other problems with a clear idea as to the correct position

it occupies in tbe complete whole and then proceed to examine the matter with an unprejudiced and impartial mind. Similarly, if you find anything wrong with the equilibrium and balance of life and desire to put it aright, it will be still more dangerous if you treat one of the problems of life as tbe wbole problem and revolve tbe whole machinery of existence on that particular point. If you do tbis, you will merely upest tbe whole balance once again. Tbe correct method of reform is to examine with an unbiased mind the whole scheme of life, from its basic pbilosophy rigbt up to the details into which it branches off and then to locate the evil and discover its true nature.

So the main reason for the difficulty encountered in understanding and correctly solving the economic problem of man is that some people look at this problem from the point of view of economic alone; others exaggerate its importance and declare it to be the whole problem of life; still others wish to build a complete philosophy of life and tbe whole system of morality, culture, and society on economic foundations only and in this manner they have reduced man's position in this world to that of a free grass-eater in a pasture. for if economics alone were to be the foundation of human life, then the idea for which man exists. is no better than that for which a bullock exists, namely, to fatten himself merrily on the green grass. Likewise, if the economic stand-point predominates in the spheres of moral, spiritual. rational. sociological. psychological and other sciences, it will

lead to a very great disequilibrium, because in these spheres of life, economics has no application whatsoever. Applied to these spheres economics will convert morality and spirituality into selfishness and materialism, transform the rational sciences into the culinary arts, infuse business motives and commercial ideas in social conduct and lead psychology to study man as merely an economic animal. Can there be a greater injustice to humanity ?

The Real Economic Problem

If we look at the question in a plain, straight forward manner, avoiding terminological and professional complications we find the economic problem of man to be no more than this: with a view to sustain and advance human civilization how to arrange economic distribution so as to keep all men supplied of the necessities of existence and to see that every individual in society is provided with opportunities adequate to the development of his personality and the attainment of the highest possible perfection according to his capacity and aptitude.

In the earlier times the economic problem was almost as simple for men as it is for animals. Infinite means of life were scattered on God's good earth. All that was needed to sustain the life of the human species was available in abundance. Every one went out to seek his portion and obtained it from these treasures. No one had to pay the price of his

necessities nor was one man's portion in the grip of another. This holds good even today as far as animals are concerned. But in ancient times almost similar conditions prevailed for mankind. One could just go out and secure one's natural food, either in the shape of fruits or hy hunting animals. One could manage to cover one's hody with natural products and form a shelter and refuge whenever he found a suitahle place. But God did not mean to keep man in this condition for a long time. He had endowed him with an innate urge to seek out and suhstitute collective social life instead of the isolated individual life into which he was horn and hy his lahour to create for himself hetter means of life than those with which nature had furnished him. The natural desire for a permanent relationship hetween man and woman, the dependence of a human child for a longer period on the protection of his parents, the deep interest of man in his progeny and the affection hetween hlood relations: these were the things which nature had ingrained in him to direct his efforts towards huilding a social life. Similarly, not heing content with natural products hut producing foodgrains for himself hy tilling the land; not heing satisfied with covering his hody with leaves hut producing cloth of himself hy his own industry; not living in caves and dens hut constructing houses for himself; not considering it sufficient to satisfy his needs with physical implements hut inventing stone, iron, wooden and other implements; all these urges have heen implanted in him hy Providence and necessarily

implied that he should gradually become civilised. Hence if man became social and civilised he did not commit any crime; rather this was the inherent demand of his nature and the deliberate purpose of his Creator.

With the advent of civilisation certain things were inevitable, e.g.

1. that the necessities of human life should multiply and no single individual be able to secure all his necessities, some of which must be secured for him by others, while he himself should secure a part of the necessities of others;

2. that the necessities of life should be exchanged and gradually some medium of exchange should be evolved and established;

3. that the means of production for the necessities of life and means of transportation and communication should multiply and that man should take advantage of all the inventions which may come to his knowledge; and

4. that man should have the satisfaction and assurance that the objects which he has secured by his own industry, the implements with which he works, the ground on which he has built his house, and the place where he carries his professional business, all these will remain

in his possession, and after his death be transferred to those who may be nearer and dearer to him than others.

So the appearance of various trades and professions, the system of purchase and sales, the fixation of prices of commodities, the introduction of coins as a standard of price and a medium of exchange, international commerce nd export and import business, the utilisation of all sorts of new means of production, and the evolution of the rights of property and succession; all that was quite natural to man and there was nothing sinful in it of which he should repent. Besides this, with the development of social life it was also necessary:

(1) that owing to the disparity which nature itself has created in the potentialities and powers of different individuals, some individuals should be able to earn and produce more than they need and some should be able to secure only their bare necessities, while otbers even less than what they need;

(2) that some individuals should be able to secure a better start in life in consequence of inherited wealth, and some should start their life with fewer means, while others should start their struggle in life without any means whatsoever;

(3) that owing to the operation of natural causes there should be found in every

social aggregate men who are unfit to participate in the business of life; for example, children, the aged, the sick and incapacitated persons; and

(4) that there should he certain individuals who offer themselves for employment and certain others who secure their services and by this means besides the development of free industry, trade, and agriculture, the relationship of employer and employee assume a social importance.

All these factors are also, in their own way, the natural consequences and phenomena of man's social life, and their emergence too is by no means an evil which may call for suppression. Unable to trace the real source of the evils which flow from altogether different social causes, many people lose their levelheadness and start denouncing individual ownership, money, or machines or the natural inequalities of humanity, and sometimes civilisation itself. This is, however, in reality a case of wrong diagnosis and wrong remedy.

Any attempt to check the natural process of social evolution and to eliminate those essential aspects of social life which are the products of basic human nature is, certainly, devoid of all sense and involves a greater possibility of loss than that which is tried to he offset. The real economic problem of man does not consist in finding out how to prevent the development of civilised social life or to interfere with the natural cause of its advance and

eliminate its essential aspects; the real problem is how, while keeping intact the natural evolution of social forces, to prevent social tyranny and injustice, to fulfil nature's demand that every creature should receive its portion, and to remove those obstacles which cause the faculties and powers of a large number of persons to be wasted away merely on account of lack of necessary means

The Causes of Evils in the Economic System

We should now examine what are the real causes of the present economic evils and what is the nature of this evil. Evil in the economic system begins when the natural selfishness of man exceeds the limits of moderation. It develops with the aid of certain other immoral habits and receives further support from an inherently defective political system, especially if the latter has no moral basis. After throwing the whole economic system out of gear, it poisons the entire social life in all its ramifications. I have explained that both individual ownership of property and the fact of some individuals being economically better placed than others were in accordance with the natural scheme of things and are no evils by themselves. No evil effect could arise from them if all the moral qualities of man had had the opportunity to assert themselves in their proper balance and true proportion and if externally a political system existed which would maintain justice at all costs, even if it came to the application of force. But what

transformed these two things into positive evils is the fact that people who were in a hetter condition economically owing to the operation of natural causes fell a prey to selfishness, narrow mindedness, jealousy, miserliness, greed, dishonesty and worship of the self. The devil put into their heads that the means of living which they had acquired in excess of their real needs and to which they had full proprietary rights. could he spent rightly and rationally in two ways, viz., (1) in their own comfort, pleasure. recreation. embellishment and good living and (2) in acquiring further means of living and if possible in getting hold of the means of other people. therehy erecting themselves into veritahle demi-gods. The first satanic idea resulted in the rich refusing to recognise the rights of those memhers of the community who were deprived of a share in the distribution of wealth or who ohtained a share less than their real needs. The rich considered it perfectly correct to leave these people in starvation and destitution. Their narrowmindedness did not permit them to realise that such an attitude would breed professional criminals in human society, produce men steeped in ignorance and meanness, make them a prey to physical weakness and disease, and that the physical and mental powers of these persons would he arrested in their development and prevent them from playing their part in the evolution of human culture nd civilisation and this would injure and damage that society as a whole of which the rich themselves were a part. Not content with this, the wealthy folk multiplied their

necessities of life very much over and above their real needs, and for the purpose of fulfilling the artificial and self-created requirements of their self-indulgence, they made many of those persons who could serve civilisation their own way to suhserve their selfish personal ends. Hence for these rich people adultery hecame a necessity for which an army of prostitutes, go-hetweens and dishonourable agents had to be recruited. For them music was a regular need, to satisfy which another army had to be secured of musicians, dancing girls, drum-beaters ad manufacturers of musical instruments. For them it was necessary to have numerous unhealthy recreations for which purpose a large force of jesters, actresses, storytellers, photographers, painters and other useless professionals had to be raised. They also felt the need of hunting for the sake of which many people, instead of heing put to some good work, were called upon to drive about animals in jungles. They also wanted pleasures of intoxication and forgetfulness, for which purpose a large numher of men were engaged to prepare liquor, cocaine, opium and other drugs and agents intoxicants. In short, these agents of the devil did not stop merely at involving a large portion of society in moral, spiritual and physical degradation, but were cruel enough to divert big portion of humanity from proper and useful occupations, and force them to take up useless, mean and harmful jobs. Thus they misdirected the pace of civilisation and turned it into channels which were to lead mankind to destruction. And the matter did not end

here. In addition to wasting all this human capital, they also misused the material wealth in their possession. They professed the need for palaces, big bungalows, gardens, recreation grounds, dance halls, etc., so much so that even after death the wretched fellows required for their rest whole acres of land and spacious tombs. In this way the land, the building materials, and the human labour which could very well bave provided tbe residential needs of other human beings, were utilised for the temporary resort and permanent residence of each single one of these pleasure-loving people. They considered it necessary to have jewellery and ornaments, fine utensils, means of ornamentation and decoration, high class means of riding, and God alone knows what other paraphernalia, so much so that even their doors were considered to be naked without costly curtains, and they could not suffer to keep the walls of their palaces bare of pictures costing hundreds and thousands of rupees. The floor of their rooms required to be covered with carpets costing thousands of rupees and even their dogs required golden collars and velvet cushions. In this manner a good deal of that raw material and much of that human labour which could have been used to cover the bodies and fill the bellies of thousands of human beings was devoted to the self-indulgence of one single individual.

This was the result of one part of that satanic guidance. The result of the second part proved to be worse. In the first place, it is obviously wrong in principle that a person should be entitled to amass

all the means of living over and above his real need which he may have come to possess and continue to use to secure further means. It is evident that the means of living which God has created on earth are meant for satisfying the real needs of mankind. If, therefore, by sheer good luck one finds himself possessing more of these means than his requirements justify, it only implies that a surplus which was really the portion of others has reached him. Why should he therefore hold it for himself? He should look around for people who are not fit to secure their portion of the means of living, or who have failed to secure them, or again who have received less than their needs, and he should realise that it is these fellows whose portion has come into his hands. As they could not secure it,it behoves him to transfer it to them. It will be wrongful act if, instead of doing this, which is the proper thing to do, he starts using them for securing further means of living, for, in any case, the further mean which he will secure will be much more than his real needs and requirements. Hence, in attempting to secure them, nothing is gained except the satisfaction of his greed and avarice. The portion of time, industry and ability which he spends in securing the means of living commensurate with the real needs of his life are doubtless well and truly spent, but to spend them in securing something over and above his real needs, implies that he is degrading himself into an econōmic animal, rather a wealth-producing machine, whereas there are better methods of spending his time and energy and exercising his

mental and physical faculties in pursuits other than the acquisition of further wealth. Consequently, from the point of view of true reason and nature the very principle which the devil has inculcated among his pupils is inherently wrong. But, furthermore, the practical methods adopted on the basis of this principle are so accursed and their results so horrible that they cannot even be correctly assessed.

There are two methods of utilising the surplus to secure further means, i.e.

(1) that they should be lent on interest, and

(2) that they should be invested in commercial or industrial undertakings.

Although hoth these methods differ to some extent in their nature, the inevitahle result of their combined action is the division of society into two classes: one, that small class which possesses means of living over and ahove its requirements and employs those means to grah further means of living; and the other, that large class which possesses means just according to its needs, or in a measure less than its needs, or does not possess them at all. The interests of these two classes not only clash against each other hut inevitably lead to mutual struggle and strife. And thus the economic system of humanity which Providence had hased and built on mutual cooperation ad exchange ends in internecine struggle and strife.

As this struggle develops the richer class steadily decreases in numher while the poor class

goes on increasing, for the very nature of this mutual struggle is such that a wealthy individual attracts by force of his wealth the means possessed by others less wealthy than himself, thereby throwing the latter down into the lower stratum. In this manner the means of life in the world are becoming gradually restricted and confined day by day to a less and less portion of the population, and the greater part of the population is slowly and steadily heading towards sheer poverty or absolute dependence on the rich. In the beginning the struggle starts on a small scale; then the infection spreads by stages to all countries and nations so that even after bringing the whole world within its tentacles it still cries for more and more. Thus when it becomes a general practice in any country that those possessing wealth in excess of their needs should invest the surplus in profitable undertakings and in the production of the necessities of life, the investment can yield full profits only if the entire product of industry is purchased by the people of the country in which the surplus wealth has been invested. But, in practice, this does not happen, and in reality it cannot happen, because, those who possess less wealth than their needs have consequently less purchasing power, and cannot purchase all the products in spite of their need for them. On the other hand, those who possess wealth in excess to their needs are anxious to set aside a portion of their incomes for further investment in profitable undertakings and therefore they do not spend all the money they can in purchasing

consumer goods. This results perforce in a portion of the manufactured products heing left unpurchased or, in other words, a portion of the investments of the rich people does not come back to them and lies at tbe debit of the country's industry as a loan. This constitutes one cycle only. You can imagine, however, that in every one of the numerous cycles of this nature the wealthy classes will go on using a part of their returned income in further investment and in every cycle that proportion of their invested wealth wbicb does not return into their hands goes on increasing, thereby multiplying the debts of the country's industry twofold and even thousandsfold, and even to an extent which that country can never be in a position to pay off. In this manner no alternative is left to the country to escape the danger of hankruptcy except exporting for sale to other countries goods which are left over and cannot be sold in that country. This is really too tantamount to seeking countries to which this misfortune of hankruptcy can he transferred. In this way the struggle transcends the harriers of a single country and steps into the international sphere.

It will now he evident that there is not one country which is running its affairs on the hasis of this satanic economic system; rather most of the countries of the world are in the same predicament; that is, they are compelled to save themselves from bankruptcy or, in other words, to transfer their bankruptcy to some other country. And this leads to international rivalry which takes the following forms.

(1) Every country, in offering its goods in the international market, tries to produce the greatest quantity at the minimum cost of production, and this involves the scaling down of wages of labour to the lowest possible limit, so that the portion of national wealth which comes into the hands of the labouring classes is further reduced and its income falls to a level where even its bare needs are not satisfied.

(2) Every country places embargo on imports within its boundaries and spheres of influences, and tries to monopolise for itself the raw materials which lie within its territory so that other countries may not secure and take advantage of them. This results in international struggle which leads to war.

(3) These exploiting dacoits invade those countries which are unable to keep off this bankruptcy from being imposed upon them and not only do they try to sell in those countries the surplus products of their own, but they try to invest their surplus capital for which they do not find any avenues of profitable investment in their own country. In this way, the same problem ultimately appears in those countries which had originally arisen in the countries of the investors; that is, the full amount of investment cannot be

returned and a major portion of tbe income from this investment is again invested in some profitable business so that the burden of debts increases to such an extent that even if all these countries were sold off, tbe investment would not be recovered in full. It is evident that if tbis cycle is allowed to work in tbis manner, the whole world will ultimately lose its solvency, and no place will be left to which tbe blight of bankruptcy could be transferred. And in tbe end mankind will feel the need of seeking markets in Mars, Venus, and Jupiter for investing their wealth and selling their surplus goods. Thus, through this international excbange, a handful of bankers, brokers, and industrial and business magnates so completely gather in their clutches all the economic resources of the world that the whole of humanity is reduced to a state of dependence upon them. It bas now become well-nigh impossible for any individual to undertake any work or business independently, relying merely on his own physical and mental powers in order to secure for bimself a portion of the means of living which exist on God's earth. No opportunity is left in these days for small industrialists and agriculturists to earn their livelihood freely. Everyone is compelled to accept the lot of slaves, servants and labourers of

> these financial princes and captains of industry. And they exploit all the physical and mental faculties as well as the whole time of other people giving them in return only a hare minimum of wages at the suhsistence level. This accounts for the whole of humanity having heen reduced to the lot of an economic animal. There are very few lucky individuals who can find the opportunity, in this economic struggle,to do something for their moral, intellectual and spiritual advancement or to give some attention to any object nobler and higher than the mere filling of the helly, or to develop those natural endowments with which God has gifted them for any higher end than the mere seeking of livelihood. In point of fact the economic struggle has hecome so serious and strenuous owning to this satanic system that all the other departments of life have been affected hy it and entirely put out of action.

It is still more unfortunate for humanity that moral philosophies, political systems, and legal principles of the world have also heen infected hy this devilish economic system. From east to west, everywhere, moral mentors are laying stress on economy. It is regarded as foolish and morally reprehensihle to spend all that one earns, and every one is told that he should save something out of his income and have his saving deposited in the bank or purchase an insurance policy or invest it in stocks

and shares of joint-stock companies. This means tbat what is ruinous for bumanity has become the standard of perfection and virtue in the eyes of the modern man. As for political power it bas fallen in tbe hands of a satanic system whicb instead of saving mankind from this tyranny bas itself become tbe instrument of that tyranny; and a class of godless materialists are found sitting tight everywbere on the seats of power. The laws which govern the society are also being framed under the influence of tbis same system. Tbese laws have given full freedom in practice to the struggle for tbeir individual economic interests against the interests of the community in general. The distinction between rigbt and wrong, just and unjust, in the acquisition of tbe means of living has nearly disappeared. Every metbod by which an individual can enricb bimself whetber by robbing or ruining other people, is permissible in tbe eyes of tbe law. Wine may be brewed and sold; centres of immorality may be established: immoral films may be produced; obscene writings may be publisbed; pictures for exciting passions may be advertised; speculation may become rife; institutions for earning interest and usury may be established; new metbods of gambling may be invented: in short, anything one likes may be done, and not only will the law permit one to do so but it will even protect one's so-called rigbts. And tben the law requires that tbe wealtb wbicb has by this means become concentrated in tbe hands of an individual should remain so concentrated even after his death; hence

the law of primogeniture, the custom of adoption under certain laws, and the joint family system, the object of all of wbich is that on the death of one of the snakes wbich guard a treasure another snake should be placed over it, and if by ill luck tbe snake leaves no issue, one should be ohtained from somewhere else so that the concentration of wealth is not disturbed!

These are the causes which bave created the prohlem for humanity as to bow means of living may be made accessible to every individual living on God's earth, and how opportunities may be provided to every one to advance in life according to his capacity and to develop his personality to tbe full.

The Solution Suggested by Communism

One method of solving the problem has heen suggested hy Communism and it is this : that the means of production should be taken out of the hands of individuals and transferred to the community for collective possession and that the community should also collectively undertake the distrihution of wealth to every individual each according to his needs. *Prima facie* this solution appears to be very sensihle, hut the more one considers its practical aspect the more will one realise its defects until be will have to concede that, in the ultimate analysis, its results are as had as the disease for which this cure has heen offered. It is as clear as daylight that although, theoretically speaking, the arrangements for tbe utilisation of the

means of production and distribution of products are proposed to be entrusted to the whole community, in practice the task will, of necessity, have to be handed over to a small executive body. Even though this small body may, to start with, be elected by the community, later on when all the means of livelihood come into its hold and individuals are not able to secure their sbare except through its hands, the whole community will be left belpless in its grip. Nobody will be able to ignore its will and no organised power could rise in opposition to it and be able to remove it from its place of authority. If this body dislikes any one it will mean tbat the poor fellow will be deprived of all the means of living in the land, since all the means of livelihood will be in tbe hands of this small clique. Labour will be left witbout power to strike work, if it has a grievance against the management, for, under this system there will not be many factory-owners and capitalists to enable tbe labourer to resign from one place and take up employment with another; rather in the whole country tbere will be only one factory-owner, only one capitalist, who will be tbe ruler of the country as well, and it will not be possible even to secure against him the help of any public opinion. This state of affairs will therefore have the following results: that after abolishing all the capitalists and afte doing away with all the industrialists and landholders, one big capitalist, industrialist and landholder rolled into one giant, will be imposed on the people,and he will combine

in himself the autocracy of a Czar with the absolution of a Caesar.

In the first place such an absolute and allpervading authority is so intoxicating in its nature that it is extremely difficult for any man to restrain himself from becoming a tyrant and autocrat, particularly so when he does not believe in God and in his accountability to Him. Nevertheless, even if it is assumed that this small body, obtaining vast autocratic powers, will not overstep proper bounds and will work with justice and fairness, even then under such a system there can be no opportunity for individuals to develop their personality. What human personality needs above everything else for its evolution and advancement is that it should have freedom, it should have some means at its disposal which it may use in accordance with its own discretion and its own will and choice and in so doing develop its hidden potentialities. But in the Communist system there is no such possibility. Under this system all the means pass out of the hands of the individuals into those of the executive body of the community. This executive body utilises them according to its own conception of the interests of the community. The individuals have no alternative but to work according to the plans made by the executive body if they desire to take advantage of those means; indeed they have to surrender themselves body and soul to their administrators to be moulded for purposes of communal welfare according to the plans of their masters. Thus all the individuals in a society

become practically slaves of a few individuals, as if they were all soulless, raw materials to be shaped and moulded to their desires and plans exactly as shaped to suit the needs of a craftsman. Quite obviously human civilization and culture stands to lose a great deal under this arrangement. Even if it is presumed for argument's sake that the necessities of life will he distributed with fairness and justice under such a system, its advantages will he outweighed by the defects and deficiencies of the system. The development of culture and civilization depends wholly on the fact that different people who are endowed with diverse faculties and attitudes should have the opportunity to develop themselves and play their individual part in the combined communal life. But this cannot be secured through a system wherein wholesale planning of human beings is undertaken. A few individuals, however able and will-intentioned, cannot be so omniscient as to be able to assess correctly the inherent and inborn faculties of millions of people and their natural inclinations, and also he able to determine correctly the mode of their development. They will err both in estimating individual capabilities and in forming opinions about what really constitutes the true interest of their society. But, in spite of it, they will try to enforce their plans and mould according to their blue-prints the whole mass of people under their influence. This individual diversity and the variety so necessary for civilization will give place to a soulless uniformity. The natural evolution of civilization will suffer a set-

back and an artificial and spurious growth will commence. Human faculties will begin to shrivel and ultimately a great mental and moral degeneration will ensue. After all men are not like grass and vegetation to be pruned by a gardener and made to grow after a set pattern. Every man has his own personality witb a natural urge to develop according to its inclinations. If you deny him this freedom be will not develop according to your desire but will either rebel against you or fade away in unnatural gloom.

The fundamental mistake of Communism lies in fact that it treats the economic problem as the central problem and tben tries to revolve the whole of human life round this axis. It lacks the true scientific attitude towards buman problems. On the other hand, it looks at all problems with a deep economic bias. Metaphysics, ethics, history, sociology, in fine, everything witbin its sphere is influenced and overridden by the economic viewpoint and because of this one-sideness the whole balance of life is upset. Thus it is clear that in reality the Communist theory presents no correct or natural solution of the economic problems of men. It offers a solution which is both unnatural and artificial.

The Fascist Solution

As against this, another solution has been put forward by Fascism and National-Socialism that keeping individual ownership of the means of production intact, such ownership should, in the

interests of the community, be planned and controlled by the State. In practice, however, the result is in no way different from tbat of the Communist theory. Like Communism this theory also seeks to merge the individual in the community and leaves no opportunity for the free development of his personality. Besides this, the nature of the state which exercises control over individual ownership is as totalitarian and authoritarian as that of the Communist state. It requires a very strong and concentrated authority to keep the industry of a large country under control and compel it to work according to tbe plans and blue-prints made by tbe state. In a state which has such absolute coercive power in its hands it is inevitable that the population of the country will fall down before it helplessly to become the slaves of the rulers.

The Islamic Solution

Now I shall explain how Islam seeks to solve these problems. In dealing with all the problems of life, it is a fundamental point with Islam that natural laws and principles of life inherent in human nature should not be tampered with, and that whenever there is any refraction from the path of nature it should be redirected to the natural path. The second important principle on which Islam has based all its social reforms is that the introduction of a few external regulations in the social system should not be considered sufficient; on the other hand, a far greater stress should be laid on moral

reformation and the creation of the right moral attitude among men so that the evil in the mind of man should he suppressed at its root. The third basic principle which you can trace in the whole of the Islamic system is tbat the autbority and pressure of law and the coercive power of government sbould not be used except when it hecomes invitable to do so.

Keeping in view these three principles, Islam recognizes all those natural principles on the economic side of life wbich have always formed the foundation of human economy, and it abolishes only those wrong principles, not by reliance on the coercive power of the state but through the maximum of moral instructions and a small measure of external force, which mankind follows when it falls a victim to satanic desires. The principles that man should he free to strive for its livelihood, that he should retain the right of ownership over whatever he earns hy his lahour, and that disparity must exist hetween various men due to their varying abilities and circumstances has been conceded by Islam to the extent to which it is in accordance with nature. It then seeks to qualify this principle and introduce certain restrictions on its actual practice witb the object that it may not he misused and made a means of exploiting and oppressing the weaker sections of the society.

Let us first of all take the acquisition of wealth. Islam recognizes the right of man to seek the means of his livelihood on God's earth according to his

capacity, ability, and natural endowments. But it does not concede him the right to adopt such means in the acquisition of wealth as would lead to his moral degradation or upset the social order. Islam sets up the distinction of *halal* (lawful) and *haram* (unlawful)in respect of the different means of earning and imposes the han of illegality on all those methods which are morally injurious. For this purpose it has clearly specified those methods which it regards as injurious. Under the Islamic law wine and other intoxicants and drinks which spread evil and immorality are not only unlawful (*haram*) in themselves; even their manufacture, sale, purchase, and possession have been declared to be unlawful. Islam does not recognize adultery, music, dancing, and other similar things as lawful means of livelihood. It declares all such dealings as unlawful in which the gain of one individual is secured by the loss and injury of some other persons or of society as a whole. Bribery, stealing, gambling, speculation, business based on fraud and deceit, hoarding and holding back the necessaries of life with the object of raising the prices, monopoly of the means of production by one or several persons which narrows the field for others; all these methods have been declared unlawful. It bas picked out carefully and branded as illegal all such forms of business as are by their nature capable of causing litigation, or in whicb the loss or gain depends on mere luck or accident, or wherein the mutual rights of the parties are not distinguishable. If you study in detail the Islamic laws of trade and industry you will see

that the methods by which people become millionaires and multimillionaires in modern times are mostly methods on which Islam has placed stringent legal restrictions. If business is carried on within these Islamic limitations there is little possibility of any one accumulating immense wealth.

While Islam recognizes the right of the individual to the ownership of all that he may acquire by lawful means, it does not leave him entirely free in using the wealth so acquired. On the other hand it lays down restrictions on its use in different ways. It is obvious that there can be only three possible uses of the wealth which a man acquires. It can either be spent or invested to procure more wealth or may be hoarded. I shall explain here briefly the nature of restrictions which Islam has placed on each one of these uses.

All methods of spending which cause moral or social injury are forbidden. You cannot fritter away your wealth in gambling, you cannot drink wine, you cannot commit adultery, you cannot waste your money in music and dances or other means of self-indulgence. You are forbidden to wear silken dresses; you are prohibited (except in the case of women) from using golden ornaments and jewels; and you cannot decorate your house with pictures and statues. In short, Islam has closed all those outlets through which the greater portion of a man's wealth is spent on his own luxuries and indulgences. The items of expenditure which a

considers lawful are of such a type that a man may just be able to live a decent life of an average standard, and if any surplus is then left over, Islam suggests that it should be utilized in the service of virtue and righteousness in public welfare, and rendering assistance to persons who have been unable to secure and receive their share according to their needs. According to Islam the best course for a Muslim is that he should spend all that he earns on his lawful and reasonable needs, and if any surplus accrues, hand it over to others so that they may satisfy their needs. Islam regards this quality as one of the highest standards of morality and has put it forward as an ideal with such force that a society influenced by Islamic ethics will always respect those who earn and spend, much more than those who keep their wealth hoarded or who go on investing their surplus incomes in earning more. However, in spite of all this moral education and the exercise of moral pressure by a reformed society, it is not possible to get rid of individual tendencies towards greed and avarice. A good many persons will always remain who will like to invest their surplus wealth in earning further wealth over and above their needs. For this purpose Islam has placed some legal limitations on the use to which this surplus wealth can be put. It is strictly prohibited in Islamic law to lend these accumulated savings on interest. If you lend your money to any one it does not matter whether he borrows for his private needs or for business purposes, you can claim only the principal money and not a single pie more. In

this way Islam hreaks the very hack-hone of aggressive capitalism and hlunts the edge of the greatest instrument by . means of which the capitalist tries to concentrate in his hands the economic resources of the community by relying on his money power. As regards the method of using the surplus wealth as investment in one's own trade, industry, or business or providing capital to others and participating in the gains and losses of the joint undertaking, Islam considers it quite lawful and proper hut seeks hy other means to remedy the evils which flow from the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few persons. First of all, Islam does not permit the hoarding of this accumulated wealth. As I have just mentioned, it demands that whatever wealth you have, it must either be utilized in the purchase of your own necessities or handed over to others so that they may satisfy their needs, and thus the whole of the common wealth may be kept constantly in circulation. But if you do not do so and insist on its accumulation then two and a half per cent per annum will be taken out of this accumulation by force of law and spent on giving assistance to such persons as are not fit to take part in the economic struggle or have not, in spite of their struggle, been able to secure their full share. This is called *Zakat* and the administrative machinery proposed by Islam for this taxation is the joint exchequer of the community in which *Zakat* is collected and then redistributed among those sections of the community which need and deserve help. This is in

fact the best form of insurance for the society and eliminates all the evils which arise from the absence of any regular arrangement for collective help and co-operation. What really forces a man, in the capitalistic system, to accumulate wealth and invest it in profitable business and bring into existence institutions like the life insurance,is that under this system every one's life is wholly dependent on his own means. If one has not laid by anything for his old age he may face starvation in his old age; if he dies without leaving any inheritance for bis progeny, they will be driven from door to door to secure a bit of bread; if he falls sick and has nothing in store he may not be able to secure medical treatment for himself; if his house is burnt or he sustains loss in business or some other sudden calamity befalls him he cannot find any support anywhere. Similarly what forces the labouring classes under a capitalistic system to accept any terms of employment offered by the capitalist and become his slaves is this very thing : i.e., the fear that if tbe labourer does not accept the remuneration which the capitalist is prepared to offer for his toil and sweat, destitution will stare him in the face and he will not be able to hold off starvation for a single day. Moreover, it is only due to this system that the spectacle is witnessed—the greatest curse that has afflicted world by the 'grace' of this capitalistic system—that while on one side millions of hungry moutbs are to be fed, on the other side there are large stocks of agricultural produce and manufactured articles which cannot

find any market, with the result that lakhs of tons of grain is thrown into the sea instead of feeding the hungry. The reason for this also lies in the fact that no social arrangement exists for providing means of livelihood to the needy and the destitute. If these people are provided with purchasing power and enabled to buy commodities according to their needs, trade, industry and agriculture,in short every branch of economic activity, will expand and flourish. Islam roots out all these evils through the institution of *Zakat* and the agency of the public exchequer is always available to you as a helper. You need not take thought for the morrow. Whenever you are in need you can go to the public exchequer and obtain your rightful due.There is no necessity of keeping deposits in banks and of having insurance policies. You can leave this world without any anxiety for the future of your children, the exchequer of the community will be responsible for them afterwards. It is a constant and permanent helper to which you can have recourse in times of disease, old age, calamities due to earthly or heavenly causes and under any other similar circumstances. The capitalist cannot then compel you to accept a job on his own terms and conditions. There is no risk of starvation, nakedness or lack of shelter for you in the presence of the public exchequer. Then again, it should be noted that this social agency enables all those sections of the population who cannot earn or who earn much less then they require to purchase commodities necessary for their life. Thus a proper balance

hetween production and consumption is permanently maintained and the necessity does not arise for a people to go on imposing their bankruptcy upon otber people and after exhausting all victims in this world to seek them in the other planets.

Besides the *Zakat*, another plan which Islam has adopted for diffusing the wealth concentrated in one place is its law of inheritance. All other laws, except that of Islam tend to perpetuate the concentration of wealtb even after the death of the person who had accumulated it during his lifetime. Islam on the contrary, adopts the methods that the wealth which a person has been confining in his hands by gradual accumulation from all sides should be distributed immediately on his death. Under the Islamic law sons, daughters, father, mother, wife, brothers, sisters, all succeed to a person's inheritance which must be distributed among all of them according to a regular code. If near relations do not exist, a search will have to be made for distant ones and this wealth will be distrihuted among them. If no relative, near or distant,is forthcoming even then a man is not entitled to resort to adoption of any heirs himself. In that case the wbole community will succeed him and all his accumulated wealth will be deposited in the public exchequer. In this manner even if a man concentrates millions and hillions of money it will all he dispersed after his death in small portions within two or three generations, and every such

accumulation will be turned gradually into circulation according to a regular legal procedure.

Consider this economic system of which I have presented a brief plan to you. Does it not remove all those evils of individual ownership which result from the wrong guidance of the devil? There remains no necessity at all for adopting the Communist or Fascist or National-Socialist ideologies, and using those artificial methods of economic management which do not remove the evil but replace it with another. I have not here explained the complete economic system of Islam. It is difficult to explain, within the compass of this brief discourse, all the methods that can be adopted in accordance with the Islamic principles for the management of land, the settlement of trade disputes, and the raising of capital for all of which complete provision has been made in the Islamic law. I have not been able to mention how Islam has, by removing all tariff restrictions levied on exports and imports, and by abolishing octrois, cesses and tolls on the movement of commodities opened the door absolutely for free trade. Nor have I had the opportunity of mentioning that by reducing to the minimum possible extent the expenditure on the administrative machinery, on the civil services and the army, and by abolishing altogether the stamp duty on judicial proceedings, Islam has lightened a very great economic burden from society, and provided opportunities for spending the taxes for the good of society instead of allowing them to be absorbed in the unbounded expenses of the

administration. By this means the economic system of Islam becomes a great blessing for humanity. Studied with an unbiased mind, free from those prejudicea against Islam which have been inherited as an evil legacy from past history and unawed by the blaze of modern social system, I hope and trust that this Islamic system will satisfy every reasonable and trutb-seeking person as the most useful, correct and rational one for the economic welfare of humanity. But if anyone thinks it feasihle that this economic system can be auccessfully implemented even if divorced from the complete whole of the ideological, moral and cultural system of Islam, I will humbly request him to get rid of this misunderstanding. This economic system has a deep relationship with tbe political, judicial, legal, cultural and social system of Islam. And all these brhes are fundamentally based on the moral system of Islam. Then again this moral system does not stand by itself but is wholly dependent on your belief in an All-Powerful and All-Knowing God and your sense of responsihility to Him, in the conception of an after-life when all your actions will be judged hy god, in the helief that man will he punished or rewarded according to His Judgement ; and in the acceptance of the fact that code of law and morality which Muhammad (peace he upon him), the messenger of God, has placed before you as from God (of which this economic syatem is only a part) is really based on Divine guidance in all its details. If you do not accept this creed, this moral system and the whole of this code of life, completely

as it is, the economic system of Islam, divorced from its source, cannot be maintained or administered in its purity even for a single day, nor will any appreciable advantage accrue from it if you take it out of its wider context and then seek to apply to your life.